

Justin Potter
Kent, CT 06757

March 11, 2022

To: CT General Assembly Planning & Development Committee

Re: House Bill 5429, "An Act Concerning Transit-Oriented Development"

Chairman Cassano, Chairwoman McCarthy Vahey, Vice Chairman Needleman, Vice Chairwoman Goupil, Ranking Member Senator Hwang, Ranking Member Zullo, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for providing the opportunity to comment on House Bill 5429, "An Act Concerning Transit-Oriented Development," which I strongly support. The current Connecticut Department of Transportation five year capital plan calls for putting \$3.5 billion into public transit infrastructure. The State of Connecticut, specifically the legislature, should not continue to let municipalities limit the return on the state's investment, and my tax dollars, with exclusionary zoning regulations, written for the benefit of current residents who want to limit change and increase property values.

Allowing more housing near major transit stations will help Connecticut address its housing crisis, its affordability crisis, the climate crisis, and will reduce our dependence on the oil that is fueling the latest geopolitical crisis. Allowing up to 15 units per acre within a half mile of a transit station - easy walking or biking distance - is a modest but important step in the right direction.

House Bill 5429 provides a great deal of flexibility for municipalities to meet its requirements. It is not a "one size fits all" approach as will likely be alleged by opponents. In addition, it explicitly exempts areas that cannot, or should not, be built on, such as wetlands and existing infrastructure from the density calculation, so the actual density in many areas is likely to be well under 15 units per acre.

Local control of zoning is not some 'god given right,' as I heard a local zoning commissioner say recently, but one that was delegated to municipalities by you, the Connecticut state legislature, in the zoning enabling act. While I don't think local control of zoning is inherently problematic, the privilege of local control comes with responsibilities that far too many municipalities ignore. Excessive local control of zoning, or 'deregulated zoning,' as AOC referred to it in a tweet last week, in practice, has proven to be highly problematic, and is the root cause of our housing crisis.

House Bill 5429, like last year's Public Act 21-29, is an important step forward in terms of the legislature re-asserting its ultimate responsibility for zoning in order to address our housing crisis, while still leaving municipalities with a very reasonable degree of control.

Thank you again for providing the opportunity to comment, and your demonstrated commitment to addressing our housing crisis and the future of the State of Connecticut.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "JPotter". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "J" and a stylized "P".

Justin Potter